

# CHRISTIANITY

*ITS OWN PROOF;*

BRIEFLY

Demonstrated from the known State and Condition

BOTH

OF MAN AND THE WORLD.



*To which is added,*

A

WORD OF ADVICE TO THE SERIOUS CHRISTIAN;

Chiefly selected from the Writings of the late pious, and divinely-illuminated Author,

*KK*  
WILLIAM LAW, A. M.

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Suffer me that I may speak, and after that I have spoken, mock on.

Job, chap. 41, ver. 5.

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SHEFFIELD,

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**T**HE Editor of this small Publication is under no Concern what Judgment the Reader may please to pass upon it. He is fully convinced that the important Subject here offered to the serious Perusal and Attention both of the Christian and Unbeliever, contains such divine Truths as are indisputably of the greatest Moment; and, as such, every Man's first Concern. Under this Conviction he feels no Inclination to apologize for its Appearance; he neither stoops to supplicate the Protection, nor crave the Auspices of a popular Name, to give it sanction.

Not only the Christian, but the Deist will find, in this short Tract, something to touch his Heart, if he can read it without Prejudice and Prepossession.

The Christian will perceive in the clearest Light, the deep and comfortable Foundation of his Gospel Faith, and the wretched Folly of those who would set up a Religion founded only upon human Reason. The Patrons of Reason and Infidelity may also see Reason fully maintained in all its just Rights, without arrogating any Religion of its own, and the Truth of the Gospel, or the Fall and Redemption of Man, incontestably proved to all our Senses and Reason, by every kind of Misery, Evil and Sin in the World, and by every thing we know of God, Ourselves, and the World we live in.

G. K.

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## Christianity its own Proof.

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THE whole System of Christianity has generally been looked upon as a mystery of salvation, solely founded in the divine pleasure, and to be such a scheme of redemption as is wholly to be resolved into the contrivance of the will and wisdom of God; and, therefore, men can think as differently of it, can fall into as many opinions about it, as they can of the will and wisdom of God. Hence has arisen all the *speculative opposition* to the gospel. It is because reason, human speculation and conjecture is always imagining it can form a religion more worthy of the wisdom and designs of the Supreme Being than the christian is; and would be thought to oppose the gospel only for the honour of God and the divine attributes. This is the great prevailing *Idolatry* of the present *Heathen World*, or that part of mankind who are Infidels or Deists.

Sincerely to be pitied is the poor unbeliever, whose short sighted reason, incapable of seeing further than the externals of christianity, furnishes him with some plausible objections that seem to weaken its outward evidence, but cannot reach the spirit and power by which it is animated and supported.—Christianity was instituted for the common salvation of all men: its essential truths, therefore, are plain and obvious, level to every capacity, and stand in

the need of learned labour to inculcate and explain them; they are rather matter of feeling than of reasoning.

Whatever is within, whatever is without us, calls aloud for a Saviour. Change, corruption, distemperature and death, have, by the sin of fallen angels and of fallen man, been unhappily introduced into this system of things which we inhabit. The whole creation groaneth; and animals and vegetables, and even the immortal image of God himself in man, are all in bondage to their malign influences; so that every thing cries out, with the apostle Paul, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?"—so that every thing cries out, with the apostle Peter, "Lord save me, or I perish!" These are inevitable truths which all men, at some time or other, must feel, and feel deeply too, whether they attend to them now or not. For christianity is no fiction of enthusiasm or invention of priests, but is as self-evident as our senses: all learning on both sides, either for or against it, is insignificant; it stands upon a bottom quite superior to it. It is its own proof; it wants neither miracles nor outward witness, but, like the sun, is only its own discoverer.

Christianity is no history of any absent, distant, or foreign thing; but is a manifestation of an inherent, real life and death in every man—grounded on the certainty of his first angelical nature, on the certainty of his real fall from that into an animal earthly life of impure bestial flesh and blood, and on the certainty of an inward redemption from it, by the divine nature given again into him. These three great points, with all the doctrines, duties and consequences that are essentially contained in, or flow from them, are christianity. Every man, therefore, from the beginning of the world, has had christianity written and preached within him; as it contains



contains the fall of man and his want of being raised to a better state. But as we see that the truth and reality of his fall, and the truth and reality of his redemption by a real birth from above, can be lost, nay, disowned, amongst those that are daily reading the scriptures; so it is no wonder that the same should have happened to those who had no scriptures to read. Nothing touches the truth of the debate betwixt the Christian and Infidel, but that which proves, with certainty, that man has or has not lost a divine life. If he is a fallen creature, then christianity sufficiently proves itself; but if it can be proved, that man is not fallen, but stands in that state and degree of life in which God created him, the Deists have reason enough to reject the christian scheme of redemption. For man, standing in that first perfection of life which God breathed into him, and in that very outward state or world into which God brought him, wants no more redemption than the most glorious angels do. But the truth of the matter is this. Every man's own nature and condition in the world shew him how unreasonable, nay, impossible it is, that a God, who has nothing in himself but infinite goodness and infinite happiness, should bring forth a race of intelligent creatures that have neither goodness nor happiness. The vanity, poverty and misery of man's life and condition in this world, is the true proof of his fallen state.— There is no need to appeal to any thing but man's own nature and condition in the world to shew that human nature, now, is not that human nature which it was at first created. The ground and foundation, therefore, of christianity is undeniable: it is as simple and plain as the feeling our own evil and misery is, and as natural as the desire of being saved and delivered from it. Away, then, with all the fictions and workings of reason, either for or

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against

against christianity! They are only the wanton sport of the mind whilst ignorant of God and insensible of its own nature and condition. Death and life are the only things in question: life is God, living and working in the soul; death is the soul, living and working according to the sense and reason of beastial flesh and blood. Both this life and this death are of their own growth, growing from their own seed within us; not as busy reason talks or directs, but as our heart turns either to the one or the other. Nothing can be easier than for reason to object, and continue objecting, to the extraordinary matters of the Old and New Testament: but this is only a mere playing with words. For true christianity began before the scriptures were written, and is as old as the creation and fall of man: it teaches the absolute necessity of man's dying to his present life in order to have a better from God. This is the christianity that began with the fall, and has been preached ever since to every son of fallen man in every corner of the world; and by the same preacher that tells every man that he ought to be better than he is. For was not man fallen from a better state than that he is now in, he could no more be ashamed or offended at any thing that his nature prompts him to do, than the ox is ashamed at breaking into a good pasture: had not beauty, and light, and the glory of brightness, been his first state by creation, he would now no more want the beauty of objects than the ox wants to have his pasture enclosed with beautiful walls and painted gates. Every vanity of fallen man shews our first dignity, and the vanity of our desires are so many proofs of the reality of that which we are fallen from. Man wants to see himself in riches, greatness and power, because human nature came first into the world in that state; and, therefore, what he had in reality  
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in paradise that is he vainly seeking for, where he is only a poor prisoner in the valley and shadow of death. Every thing that we outwardly see and inwardly feel, every thing that we know of God and every thing that we know of man, is a daily irresistible proof that man is in a fallen state. We have no more occasion to go to Moses to prove, that man and the world are in a fallen state, than to prove that man is a poor, miserable, weak, vain, distressed, corrupt, selfish, self-tormenting, perishing creature; and that the world is a sad mixture of false goods and real evils; a mere scene of all sorts of trials, vexations, miseries; all arising from the frame, and nature, and condition both of man and the world.— This is the full infallible proof of the fall of man; which is not a thing learnt from any history, but shews itself every where, and every day, with such clearness as we see the sun. *Moses* is not the prover of the fact that man is fallen, but the recorder of the *when*, and *how*, and the *manner* in which the fall hath happened.

It is impossible, also, that this world, in the state and condition it is now in, should have been an immediate and original creation of God. This is as impossible as that God should create evil, either *natural* or *moral*. That this world hath evil in all its parts; that its matter is in a corrupt, disordered state, full of grossness, disease, impurity, wrath, death and darkness, is as evident as that there is light, beauty, order and harmony every where to be found in it. Therefore, it is as impossible that this outward state and condition of things should be a *first* and *immediate* work of God, as that there should be good and evil in God himself. All storms and tempests, every fierceness of heat, every wrath of cold, proves, with the same certainty, that outward nature is not a *first* work of God, as the *selfishness*,



*sickness, envy, pride, wrath and malice* of devils and men proves, that they are not in the *first state* of their creation. As no kind or degree of *moral evil* could possibly have its cause in or from God, so there cannot be the least shadow of *imperfection and disorder* in outward nature, but what must have sprung up in the *same manner*, and from the *same causes*, as sickness and corrupt flesh is come into the human body, namely, from the sin of the creature. But now, as in man, the *little world*, there is excellency and perfection enough to prove that human nature is the work of an all-perfect Being, yet, so much impurity and disease of corrupt flesh and blood as undeniably shews, that sin has almost quite spoiled the work of God. So, in the great world, the footsteps of an infinite Wisdom, in the order and harmony of the whole, sufficiently appears; yet, the disorders, tumults and evils of nature, plainly demonstrate the truth of scripture—that it was sin alone which destroyed this first state of things, and removed paradise from off the earth.

Was the world, as it now is, and we, as we now are, in the very first state in which God made it and us, there would be some foundation of saying, as some do, *What are all these things for, if they are not to be enjoyed? Why have we these passions and inclinations, if they may not be gratified?* But all these questions are fully answered, as soon as it is known that the first state of things is quite altered; that we were not created to be in this world in the manner we are now in it; that paradise was our first state, where we should have stood in divine strength and ability, insensible of any evil from outward nature. So that man, and the world in which he lives, lie both in the same state of disorder and impurity, have both the same marks of life and death in them, both bring forth the same sort of evils, both want a Redeemer,



Redeemer, and have need of the same kind of death and resurrection before they can come to their first state of purity and perfection.

I know the men of speculative reason will here object and say, *All the evil we learn or practise is from the power of example.* But when did this example begin? What mortal first introduced it into the world? Where did he learn it himself? Surely it must have proceeded from his own evil heart. So that after all our doubts, we must go back to the same source that the scripture points out to us, and fix the origin of evil in man, in the disobedience of the first father of the human race, from whom the fatal infection has spread through all his hapless posterity. For the history of past ages informs us, that the world was ever wicked as it is now, and that the violence of human passions hath ever been the spring of all the disorders and confusions in which kingdoms, families and individuals have been involved.

Vain and specious reasoning will always be overborn by facts. Look at the innocent and immaculate Babe, as some would call it, in the arms of its mother! Where is the meekness, gentleness and heavenly serenity of unfallen nature? Is not its visage marked with the fire of indignation, pride, envy, jealousy, covetousness, and all those other furious and unlovely passions, which manifest themselves upon every little provocation through life?—Whence can this proceed? Not from the force of example: for it cannot yet discern betwixt good and evil, so as to make its choice. It springs, therefore, from that root of evil which it brings with it into the world. When the human infant is set upon his legs, and begins to act for himself, he soon becomes a more pitiable object than when crying in the cradle. The strength of his life is a mere  
strength.

strength of wild passions; his reason is craft and selfish subtlety; he loves and hates only as flesh and blood prompt him; jails and gibbets cannot keep him from theft and murder. If he is rich, he is tormented with pride and ambition, if poor, with murmuring and discontent. Be he which he will, sooner or later, disordered passions, disappointed lusts, fruitless labour, pains and sickness, will tear him from this world in such *travail* as his mother felt when she brought forth the sinful animal.

Now, all this evil and misery are purely the natural and necessary effect of his birth in the bestial flesh and blood of this world; and there is nothing in his natural state that can put a stop to it: he must be evil and miserable so long as he has only the life of this world in him. Therefore, the absolute certainty of the fall, and the absolute necessity of a new birth, are truths, independently of scripture, plain to a demonstration.

How many inventions are some people forced to have recourse to, to keep off a certain *inward uneasiness* which they are afraid of, and know not whence it comes? Alas! 'tis because there is a fallen spirit, a dark aching fire within them, which has never had its proper relief, and is trying to discover itself, and calling out for help at every cessation of worldly joy.

Why are some people, when under heavy disappointments or some worldly shame, at the very brink of distraction, unable to bear themselves, and desirous of death of any kind? 'Tis because worldly light and comforts, no longer acting sweetly upon the blood, the soul is left to its own dark, fiery, raging nature, and would destroy the body at any rate, rather than continue under such a sensibility of its own wrathful, self-tormenting nature.

Who has not at one time or other felt a sourness, wrath, selfishness, envy and pride, which he could not tell what to do with, or how to bear, rising up in him without his consent, casting a blackness over all his thoughts, and then as suddenly going off again, either by the cheerfulness of the sun or air, or some agreeable accident, and again, at times, as suddenly returning upon him? Sufficient indications are these to every man, that there is a dark guest within him concealed under the cover of flesh and blood, often lulled asleep by worldly light and amusements, yet such as will, in spite of every thing, shew itself, which, if it has not its proper relief in this life, must be his torment in eternity.— And it was for the sake of this hidden hell within us that our blessed Lord said, when on earth, and says now to every soul—“ *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*”

These are not fictions of a visionary imagination, but sober truths, written and engraven in the book of every man's own nature. No man, since the fall, but is a living witness to these truths: to deny them is to own and prove them. For we could not tell a lie or resist the truth, but because we have this dark enemy to truth hidden in our bosom.

Oh, poor unbelievers! that content yourselves with this foundation of hell in your nature, and either seek for no salvation, or, what is worse, turn your backs with disregard on the one only Saviour that God himself can help you to! I appeal to nothing but the state of your own hearts and consciences, to prove the necessity of your embracing the religion of the gospel. I will grant you all that you can suppose of the goodness of God, and that no creature will be finally lost, but what infinite love cannot save. But still here is no shadow of security for infidelity; and your refusing to be saved  
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through the Son of God, while the soul is in the redeemable state of this life, may, at the separation of the body, for ought you know, leave it in such a hell as the infinite love of God cannot deliver it from. For, *first*, you have no kind or degree of proof that your soul is not that dark, self-tormenting, wrathful and unperishing nature above mentioned, which has lost its own proper light, and is only comforted by the light of the sun, till its redemption be effected. *Secondly*, You have no kind or degree of proof that God himself can redeem, or save, or enlighten this dark fallen soul any other way than as the gospel proposes. Therefore your own hearts must tell you, that for ought you know, infidelity, or the refusing the gospel method of salvation, may at the end of life, leave you in such a state of self-torment as the infinite love of God can no way deliver you from.

You build much upon certain clear ideas, founded in the nature and fitness of things; but I beseech you to consider, that here in this great point, on which all depends, you have no ideas at all; for you have not one clear, or even obscure idea, that your souls cannot be in this disordered state, or that they can be set into a right order without the birth of the Son of God brought forth in them.

You may perhaps, by a long and strict attention to reason, clear ideas, the fitness and unfitness of things, have at last arrived at a demonstrative certainty, that all these sentiments of religion are mere bigotry, superstition and enthusiasm. I shall only now observe, that youthful extravagance, passion, and debauchery, by their own natural tendency, without the assistance of any other guide, seldom fail of making the same discovery. And though it is not reckoned any reflection upon great wits when they hit upon the same thought, yet it may seem  
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some disparagement of that reason and philosophy which teach old men to think and judge the same of religion, that passion and extravagance teach the young.

But to return. The truth of the matter is this : we have no want of religion, but so far as we want to better our state in God ; or so far as we are unpossessed of God, or less possessed of Him than we might be, and our nature requires. This is the true and only ground of religion, viz. to alter our state of existence in God, and to have more of the divine nature and perfections communicated to us.— Therefore, nothing can be our good in religion but that which alters our state of existence in God for the better, and puts us in possession of something of God, or makes us partakers of the divine nature in such a manner and degree as we wanted it.

Hence it sufficiently appears, that your way of natural reason cannot be the way of salvation ; because the want of salvation is nothing else but the wanting to have our state and manner of existence in God altered for the better, or to have something of God communicated to us, which we want and are capable of receiving. But if this is and must be the nature of salvation, then no religion can save us, or do us our proper good, or supply our proper want, but that which has power to alter our state of existence in God, or to communicate to us that of God which we want and are capable of. For if salvation is a communication of something of God to the person saved (and who can deny it,) then we have the certainty of demonstration, that a man can no more do this for himself than he can do it for another. Therefore it follows, that nothing but ~~that~~ <sup>the</sup> same God which created us, which gave us our state and manner of existence in Him, and communicated to us that which we possess of Him ; no-  

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thing but that same God can redeem us or help us to that state or manner of existence in Him, which we have lost and are in want of.

On the other hand, your religion of reason is a religion of natural strength and power, that rejects the necessity of a Saviour, that feels no want of Him, that rejects the necessity of Divine Grace, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and feels no want of it. These are the essential parts of your religion of reason, which are, in fact, no more the true religion of man than the faculty of doubting or erring is; and that it can no more make those to be divine who place their trust in it, than a great error can make those to be divine who abide by it.

There never could have been any dispute about the possibility of saving ourselves by our own natural faculties, had not men lost all true knowledge both of God and themselves. For this dispute cannot happen till men suppose God to be some *outward Being*; that our relation to him is some *outward relation*; that religion is an outward thing that passes between God and us, like terms of behaviour between man and man; that sin hurts and separates us from God, only as a misdemeanour hurts and separates us from our prince; that an offended God either gives or refuses pardon to us, as an angry prince does to his subjects; and that what gives or forgives to us is something as distinct or different from himself, as when a prince, sitting upon his throne, gives or forgives something to an offender that is an hundred miles from him.

Now all this is the same total ignorance of God; what He is in himself, and what He is in relation to us, and the manner of His being *our Good*, as when the old idolaters took men to be gods. And yet nothing is more plain than that your religion of reason is wholly founded upon all these gross and false

false notions of God. You have not an argument in its defence, but what supposes that our relation to God is an *outward relation*, like that of subjects to their prince; and that what we do to and for God, as our service to Him, is and must be done by our own power, as that which we do to and for our prince must be done by our own power. And from these errors it is that you draw this false conclusion, that if our own reason and natural power were not sufficient to obtain for us all that we want and God requires of us, God must be less good than a good earthly prince, who requires no more of us than that which we have a natural strength to do or can do by our own power. The conclusion that you here think to be so just and strong, as not possible to be denied, is so far from being so, that it has all the mistakes, error and ignorance of God, that is in idolatry, when it takes God to be something that he is not; and has all the false devotion that is in idolatry, when it puts the same trust in and expects the same benefit from its own powers and faculties, which idolaters did in and from their idols. And, therefore, when you place the power of your salvation in your *intellectual light*, or the strength of your *own reason*, you place it in your *weakest* part, in the *poorest*, most *trifling* and *insignificant* thing that belongs to you, and upon that which has the least effect in human life. The only good that reason can do to you, is to remove the impediments of virtue; that the inmost spirit of your mind may receive its strength and assistance from the Spirit of God, from which, as the needle from the loadstone, it has all its instinct of goodness and tendency towards God. Nothing is, or can possibly be salvation, but a divine life in the soul: but reason can no more bring forth this life than it can kindle life in a plant or animal. You might as well write the word *Flame*  
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upon the outside of a flint, and then expect that its imprisoned fire should be kindled by it, as to imagine that your natural reason and understanding, and the strength and activity of your own powers, should raise your soul out of its state of death and kindle the divine life in it. No! Nature tells every one that we can only be heavenly by a spirit derived from heaven, as plainly as it tells us that we can only be earthly by having the spirit of this world breathing in us. Now, look where you will, the birth or kindling of life through all nature shews you, that the way of gospel regeneration, or raising the divine life again in the fallen soul, is that one and the same way by which every kind of life is and must be raised wherever it is found. The gospel saith, unless the fallen soul be born again from above it cannot see or enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now here it says a truth, as much confirmed and ratified by all nature as when it is said, except a creature hath the light and spirit of this world born in it, it cannot become a living animal of this world: or except a seed have the light and spirit of this world incorporated in it, it cannot become a vegetable of this world, either as plant, fruit or flower. How vain and absurd would it be to talk of a creature's being made a member of a vegetable or animal kingdom through an *outward grace* or *favour*? Or by any *outward thing* of any kind? For does not sense, reason and all nature force you to confess, that it is absolutely impossible for *any thing* to become a *living member* of the animal or vegetable kingdom, but by having the animal or vegetable life *raised* or brought forth in it? Therefore, does not sense and reason, and all nature join with the gospel in affirming, that no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven till the *heavenly life*, or that which is the life in heaven, *be born* in him?

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The christian doctrine of the salvation of mankind by a birth of the Light and Holy Spirit of God in them, is not only written in scripture but in the *whole state and frame* of nature, and of every life in this world; for every perfect fruit openly declares, that it can have no goodness in it till the *light and spirit* of this world has done that to it and in it which the light and spirit of God must do to the soul of man, and, therefore, is a full proof that it is as absolutely necessary for every human creature to receive the Light and Holy Spirit of God to save it from its own wrath and darkness, as it is necessary for every fruit of the earth to be raised and regenerated from its own bitterness and sourness by receiving the light and spirit of this world into it.

And here, my friend, you may, with certainty, see what a poor groundless *fiction* your religion of *human reason* is: its insignificancy and emptiness is shewn you by every thing you can look upon. It is so far from being able to help you to that knowledge which your nature and condition want, that it can only help your ignorance to encrease and fructify in doubts, fictions and absurd debates. And the thing cannot be otherwise: man must *walk in a vain shadow* so long as reason is his oracle. When, therefore, reason takes upon it to determine on things not manifested to it by the senses, as to judge about a divine new birth, a divine faith; or how the soul wants or does not want God, &c. it is then as much out of its place and office as the eye that takes upon it to smell; and its true name and nature is, *Whim, Humour, Caprice, Conjecture, Opinion, Fancy*, and every other species of blindness and passion.

You shall see reason possessed of all that belongs to it, and yet religion set up in a better place.

I will grant you more than you imagine in respect of reason: I will grant it to have as great a share in

the good things of religion as it has in the good things of this life; that it can assist the soul just as it can assist the body; that it has the same power and virtue in the *spiritual* world that it has in the *natural* world; that it can communicate to us as much of the one as the other, and is of the same use and importance in the one as in the other. Can you ask more?

Now man, considered as a member of this world, that is, to have his share in the good that is in it, is a *sensible* and a *rational* creature; that is, he has a certain number of senses, as seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching, by which he is *sensible* of that which the outward world, in which he is placed, can do to him or communicate to him, he is sensible of what kind and degree of happiness he can have from it: besides these organs of sense, he has a power or faculty of *reasoning* upon the ideas which he has received by these senses.

Now, how is it that this world, or the good things of this world, are communicated to man? How is he put in possession of them? To what part of him are they proposed? Are his *senses* or his *reason* the means of his having so much as he has or can have from this world?

Now, here you must degrade reason just as much as it is degraded by religion, and are obliged to set it as low with respect to the things of this world as it is set with respect to the things of the spiritual world. It is no more the means of communicating the good things of the one than of the other. And, as St. Paul says, *The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God: for this reason, because they are spiritually discerned.* So you must, of necessity, say, the *rational* man cannot receive the things of this world, for this reason, because they are *sensibly* received, that is, by the organs of sense.

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Reason, therefore, has no higher office or power in the things of this world than in the things of religion; and religion does no more violence to your reason, or rejects it any other way, than all the good things of this world reject it: it is not *seeing*, it is not *hearing*, *tasting* or *feeling* the things of this life; it can supply the place of no one of these senses.

Now, it is only thus *helpless* and *useless* in religion: it is neither seeing nor hearing, tasting nor feeling of spiritual things. Therefore, in the things of religion, and in the things of this world, it has one and the same *insignificance*. It is the *sensibility* of the soul that must receive what this world can communicate to it; it is the *sensibility* of the soul that must receive what God can communicate. Reason may follow after in either case, and view through its own glass what is done, but it can do no more. Reason may be here of the same service to us as when we want any of the enjoyments of this life; it may direct us how and where they are to be had; it may take away a cover from our eyes, or open our window-shutters when we want the light: but it can do no more towards *seeing* than to make way for the light to act upon our eyes. This is all its office and ability in the good things of religion; it may remove that which hinders the *sensibility* of the soul, or prevents the divine light's acting upon it, but it can do no more; because the faculty of reasoning is only the activity of the mind upon its own ideas or images, which the senses have caused it to form from that which has been stirred up in them, but has nothing of the nature of that which it speculates upon by-ideas.

But as soon as it is known and confessed, that all the happiness or misery of all creatures consists only in this, as they are more or less possessed of God, or

as they differently partake of the divine nature, then it must be equally known, that nothing but God can do or be any religious good to us, and also that God cannot do or be any religious good to us, but by the communication of *Himself* or the manifestation of his *own Life* within us

Hence there is nothing good even in heaven itself, but the fulness of divine communications and impressions; no wretchedness in hell, but what arises from an entire cessation of them: and this life has no possibility of being changed into a heavenly life, but so far as it is capable of divine communications. When men have once lost all sensibility of the necessity of being inwardly, invisibly and secretly supported, assisted, guided and blessed by divine communications and impressions of God upon their souls, it signifies not much what religion they profess or for what reasons they profess it. For a religion has no good of religion in it, but in so far as it introduceth the Life, Power and Presence of God in the soul. And to turn men from the faith, and love and desire of divine impressions, is to lay the axe to the root of religion, and is as direct a way to Atheism, as to teach them, as Epicurus did, that God is afar off. For a God, without any communications and impressions upon us, and a God afar off, are equally atheistical tenets, equally destructive of all piety. For this is a truth that admits of no restriction, but reaches from one end of the earth to the other, that no one can come at any divine knowledge, either in grace or nature, but through God alone. The mysteries of God, of Grace, of Nature, of Time and Eternity, can no other possible way be opened in man but by the simplicity of a godly life taught in the gospel; because only the godly life hath knowledge of God; just as the



the creaturely life hath only knowledge of the creature, and the painful life hath knowledge of pain.

All true knowledge, either of God or nature, must be born in you. You cannot possibly know any thing of God but so far as God is manifested in you; so far as his Light and Holy Spirit is born in you as it is born in Him, and liveth and worketh in you as it liveth and worketh in Him. A distant, absent, separate God, is an unknown God. For God can only manifest God, as light can only manifest light, and darkness make darkness to be known. Natural reason may trade in the outside of things; it may measure and make draughts of magnitude, height and distance of things on the earth and above the earth; it may make many fine experiments of the powers of every element: but then this is going no farther into the ground of nature than when the potter makes curious vessels with his clay and fire.

To count the stars, to observe their places or motions, is just the same height of natural knowledge as when the shepherd counts his sheep and observes their time of breeding. But the mystery of eternal nature must first be opened in man before he can know the divine philosophy of religion. For there is no knowledge of any thing, but where the thing itself is, and is found, and is possessed. Life, and every kind and degree of life, is only known by life; and so far as life reaches, there is knowledge, and no farther.

Let it be supposed, that your sceptic reason should suggest to you that there are no devils or hell, and, therefore, no occasion to believe that revelation that gives an account of them. In this case, do but turn to that which is sensible and self-evident in you, and then you must know, in the same certainty as you know yourself to be ~~living~~, that there is *wrath,*  
*alive* *self-torment,*

*self-torment, envy, malice, evil-will, pride, cruelty, revenge, &c.* Now say, if you please, there are no other devils but these, and that men have no other devils to resist; and then you will have said truth enough, have owned devils enough, and enough confessed that you are in the midst of them, that you are every where tempted by them, and that flesh and blood is too weak to resist them, and, therefore, wants some kind of saviour, of so contrary a nature as has power to destroy these works of the devil in you.

Now, this is the only knowledge that you can possibly have of an outward hell and outward devils; and this knowledge is as self-evident in you as your own thoughts, and is as near to you as your own life. But to see and know an outward hell or outward devils, that are outward living creatures, can never be your own case till all that is divine and human in you is extinguished; and then you will have knowledge enough how hell is a place, and how the devils of rage, wrath, envy and pride, &c. are living creatures.

And now, my dear reader, if you are a Deist, made so, either by the disorderly state of your own heart, or by prejudices taken from the corruptions and divisions of christians, or from a dislike of the language of scripture, or from an opinion of the sufficiency of a religion of human reason, or from whatever else it may be, look well to yourself—christianity is no imaginary refinement or speculative curiosity; but is of the highest reality and most absolute necessity. Whereas, what a vanity of all vanities there is in the religion of the Deists, who will have no other perfection or divine life but what they can have from their reason; as great a contradiction to nature as if they would have no life or strength of body, but that which can be had from  
their

their faculty of reasoning. For reason can no more alter or exalt any *one property* of life in the soul and bring it into its *perfect state*, than it can add one cubit to the stature of the body. That, and that only, can cast devils and evil spirits out of the soul; that can say to the storm, Be still; and to the leper, Be thou clean. The perfection of every life is no way possibly to be had, but as every flower comes to its perfection, viz. from its own seed and root, and the various degrees of transmutation which must be gone through before the flower is found. It is strictly thus with the perfection of the soul: all its properties of life must have their true natural birth and growth from one another. The first, as its *seed and root*, must have their natural change into an higher state; must, like the seed of the flower, pass through death into life, and blessed with the fire, and light and spirit of heaven in their passage to it; just as the seed passes through death into life, blessed by the fire, and light and air of this world, till it reaches its last perfection, and become a beautiful, sweet smelling flower. And to think that the soul can attain its perfection any other way, than by the *change and exaltation* of its first properties of life, just as the seed has its first properties *changed and exalted* till it comes to have its flower, is a total ignorance of the nature of things. Therefore, the Deist's religion or reason, which is to raise the soul to its true perfection, is so far from being the religion of nature, that it is quite unnatural, and declared to be so by every working in nature. For since reason can neither give life nor death to any one thing in nature, but every thing lives or dies according to the working of its own properties: every thing dead and alive gives forth a demonstration, that nature asks no counsel of reason nor stays to be directed by it.

But



But it may be you will say, you would believe the gospel if you could, but that its evidence cannot have that effect upon your mind. You may say also, the gospel is a matter of fact; you must examine into the truth of it as you do into the truth of other matters of history; and as both the internal and external evidence of the gospel is much defended and opposed by learned men, its evidence is so perplexed, and made a matter of such laborious and intricate enquiry, that your mind cannot come at any certainty of what you ought to believe concerning the truth of it.

Don't, therefore, my dear friend, deceive yourself, nor let any one else deceive you. The truth of the gospel lies much nearer to us than we imagine, and we only dispute and wrangle ourselves into a distance from it. Do you think that you need many books to shew you are a *sinner*, that you have the disorder of almost all the *beasts* within you, that you have, besides this, such passions and tempers of pride, envy, selfishness and malice, as would make you shun the sight of other people if they could see all that passes within you? Need any learning instruct you, that at the same time that you have all these disorders, both of the *beasts* and evil spirits within you, you have a great desire to seem to be without them, and are affecting continually to have and appear in those very virtues which you feel the want of? When you are full of hatred and envy you affect to be thought good and good natured; when proud to appear as humble.

Now, I'd fire you to know no books but *this book* of your own heart, nor to be well read in any controversy but in that which passes *within you*, in order to know the gospel to be the greatest of truths, and th<sup>e</sup> infallible voice of God speaking the way of salvation to you. No echo answers to the voice



voice that raises it, so certainly and agreeably, as the voice of nature or the state of your own heart answers to that which the gospel preaches unto you. And this I will shew you to be the shortest and surest of all methods to discover the truth of the gospel.

The gospel is built on these two pillars: *First*, That you are a fallen; *Secondly*, That you are a redeemed creature. Now, every man's own soul, and what daily passes within him, speaks these two great truths to him, with a conviction and sensibility that cannot be avoided.

You have seen, and you feel, and know that you are a sinner; that you have the disorders of the beasts and the depravity of evil spirits within you. Is not this saying to you, not in the sound of words, but by the *frame* and voice of your nature, that you are a *fallen* creature, and not in that state in which a good Being must have created you? For I appeal to yourself, in your own degree of goodness, if you could create your own children, whether you would not create them in a better state and with less evil, both of the beast and the devil in them, than that in which you was born yourself? Therefore, only supposing God to have your degree of goodness, He could not have created the first man, from whom your nature is derived, in the state that you are; and, therefore, supposing Him only to be good you have a sufficient proof; but, supposing Him to be infinitely good or goodness itself, you have an infallible demonstration written in the frame of your nature, that you are a fallen creature, or not in that state in which God created you.

Again: Do you want any learning or books, or reasoning, to shew you that every man, as well as yourself, affects to appear virtuous, to have good qualities, and is ashamed of every beastly and diabo-

lical disorder; and would seem to have virtues and goodness that he has not, because of an innate love that he has for them, and from a sense of their being proper for him? And is not this saying again with the same fulness of certainty, that you are a redeemed creature; that there is in you an inward redeemer, a light of the mind, a seed of goodness, an instinct to virtue, given you by God, though, without revelation, you dont know when nor how? And is not this such an evidence of the truth of the christian religion, and of its *fitness* to save your soul, as not only needs not the assistance of foreign books and learning, but is also sufficient to support itself against all the books and learning in the world that should oppose it? Can any echo answer better to the voice that raises it, than the voice of your nature or the state of your own heart answers to the sound of the gospel? And do you not hereby plainly see, that you stand nearer to the truth of the christian religion than you do to any thing else?—It is only the description of that which passes within you. It is the book of yourself; it talks of nothing *out* of you but that which is said *within* you; and, therefore, you have a sufficient help to understand it. To look for *outward* testimonies is like looking for yourself *abroad*; turn but your eyes inward and you have no need of miracles to shew you, that Jesus Christ came from that God that made you, and that He teaches you the only way to find that perfection and happiness for which He made you.

What can the gospel say to you of the fall of man that your heart does not feel to be true?—What can it say to you of your redemption that is not at the same time said to you by the state of your own soul? For if you was not fallen, how could you labour under so much corruption? A sinful creature cannot come from God in its sinful state,  
And,

And, on the other hand, if you was not redeemed, how could you feel a dislike of sin, an inclination to goodness, and a desire of appearing virtuous?—For what else is this desire of goodness, but a certain *inward principle* that has begun your redemption, and is trying to carry it on? Now, the christian religion says nothing to you, it has not one doctrine, or practice, or institution, but what has its immediate relation to these two great truths, and is for the sake of them, either to convince you of your fall, or to assist your redemption.

Now, if a revelation from God had only told you that you had a mixture of evil and good in you, could you have any doubt about the truth of such revelation? Or if it told you that the evil came from the fault of your first parents, and the good was God's free gift to you at their fall, that the evil might be resisted and suppressed; if it told you that God had a desire and a design in the depths of his mercy to assist the good that was in you, that it might conquer and put an entire end to all the evil of your nature, would you ask for proofs of the goodness of such a revelation, or of its being worthy of God and suitable to your own needs? Now the christian religion is this revelation. It tells you only this great truth, that you are *fallen* and *redeemed*; that is, that you have a mixture of evil and good in you: it tells you, that God, as early as the fall, redeemed you, when the seed of the woman became the enemy of the serpent; that is, as soon as the evil came into you, He, of his *free gift*, put a good power into you to withstand it: it tells you, that from the beginning of the world it has been God's gracious desire and design in and by Jesus Christ to render your redemption effectual; that is, to make the good that is in you perfectly overcome all your evil. Complain, therefore, no more  
of



of want of evidence; neither books, nor study, nor learning is wanted; the gospel is *within* you, and you are its *evidence*; it is preached unto you in your own bosom, and every thing within you is a proof of the truth of it. Ask how you shall know there is such a thing as day and night; for the fall and redemption are as manifest *within* you as day and night are manifest *without* you.

Here, Sir, in this intimate and true knowledge of yourself lies the most precious evidence of the gospel, and is as near to you as you are to yourself; because all that is said and declared, and recorded in the gospel, is only a plain record of that which is said and done, and doing in yourself. And when you once feel it thus proved to you, by its agreement with the state of your own nature, then it becomes a pearl that is dearer to you than your life; and what is best, it is then a pearl which no one can rob you of. Then all the wrangle and dispute of learned men against the truth of the gospel, will signify no more to you, nor raise any more doubt in you, than if by *history* and *criticism* they would prove that you never had any benefit from the light of the sun. If you go only outwardly to work, and seek only for an outward proof of the truth of the gospel, you can only know it by such labours, and in such uncertainty as you know other matters of history, and must be always balancing what is said for and against it. And if you come to believe it this way, your faith will be held by an uncertain tenure, you will be alarmed at every new attack and frightened at every new enemy that pretends to lessen the evidence of the gospel. But these, Sir, are difficulties that we make to ourselves, by neglecting the proper evidence of the gospel, and chusing only to know it as we know other histories that have no relation to us or connection with our own state.

The



The gospel is not a history of something that was done and past 1700 years ago, or of a redemption that was then present, but to be transmitted to posterity as a matter of history; but it is the declaration of a Redeemer, or a redeeming power that is always in its *redeeming state*; and equally present to every man.

And here you have the shortest and surest of all methods to find both the truth, and excellency and necessity of the gospel method of salvation. I put no labour or deep enquiry upon your hands: I desire you only to know, what you cannot help knowing, that you have good and evil alive and at work in you. For this is the whole of the fall of Adam and of the redemption of Jesus Christ. Say that you have no evil in you, and I will not desire you to believe the fall of Adam. Say that you have no sense of goodness in you, and I will not desire you to acknowledge the redemption through Jesus Christ. But if neither of these can be denied to be in you, if your own heart confesses these two things, how can you want a proof of the truth of that religion which only tells you that which your own heart is a witness of? So that from this plain knowledge of yourself, you are absolutely obliged either to deny the *most known* state of your heart, and to deny that you have any degree or desire of goodness in you; or to own the gospel to have *every thing* in it, both as to doctrine and precept, that strictly answers to the *state and necessities*, and good inclinations of your heart.

Thus much may serve to convince my unbelieving reader, if I have such a one, whom I would fain lead to God, that I have said nothing in favour of a modern religion of reason which, at best, can only help us to be so good, so changed and amended as a wild beast may be, that by restraints and meth-

thods is taught to put on a sort of tameness, though its wild nature is all the time only restrained, and in a readiness to break forth again as occasion shall offer.

I must now say a word to the serious Christian, for his observance of a right procedure in the debate with the unbeliever.

I would not recommend it to you, my dear Christian, when you would propagate christianity, or make true converts to it, to take the method generally practised by the modern defenders of it.—Do not attempt to shew, from *reason* and *antiquity*, the necessity and reasonableness of a divine revelation in general, or of the *Mosaic* and *Christian* in particular. Nor enlarge upon the arguments for the credibility of the gospel history, the reasonableness of its creeds, institutions and usages; or the duty of man to receive things above, but not contrary to his reason. Avoid all this, because it is wandering from the true point in question, and only helping the Deist to oppose the gospel with a shew of argument, which he must necessarily want, was the gospel left to stand upon its own bottom.

He, therefore, that opens a field of controversy to the *Deist* about revelation in general, or the history of facts, creeds and doctrines of churches, not only leads him from the merits of the gospel, but brings him into a field of battle where he may stand his ground as long as he pleases.

But the one great point that you, my dear Christian, are to aim at, must be to shew him the infinite worth of christianity, and the dreadful nature of infidelity, not by helping him to a new opinion for his reason to maintain, but by proving to him this great and decisive truth, that christianity is neither more nor less, *than the goodness of the divine life, light and love, living and working in the soul*; and that infidelity

It is in its whole nature is purely and solely *the heart of man living in, governed by, and contented with the evil workings of the earthly life, spirit, and nature.*

Stand steadily upon this true christian ground; and then you will not only stand safely yourself, but you will have left the Deist no ground to stand upon. For all the laboured volumes of infidelity, with which these last ages have swarmed, are rendered useless, and cannot put so much as a little finger into this debate. Consult all, from Hobbes to the moral philosopher, and you consult in vain; their works are as dead as themselves, and unable to give one word against this christianity.

But you, my beloved, being rightly converted to a christianity that is not forced to appeal to canons and counsels, and ancient usages to defend itself, keep close to its true and real ground; and instead of shewing the unbeliever the reasonableness of believing a long history of things, bring him into a full sensibility of the evil, and burden, and vanity of his natural state: and if he cannot be made sensible of this, you are to leave him to himself in his natural state, till some good providence awakens him out of it; and not make proposals to him of the reasonableness of believing the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the necessity of his sufferings and death, &c. for this method is full as absurd, as to enter into solemn debate with a confessed Atheist, about the reasonableness of worshipping God in spirit and truth; for, as the existence of a God is the only ground of proving that he ought to be worshipped in spirit and truth, so the certainty and belief of our fallen state, is the only ground of shewing the reasonableness of the mysteries of redemption. And he that disowns the fall of man from a divine life, has all the same reasons for rejecting the mysteries of our salvation, as the Atheist has to



to reject the doctrines of a spiritual worship of God. Therefore, to expose the mysteries of our salvation, to the wrangle of a debate with an unbeliever of the fall of man, which mysteries have no other ground to stand upon, is not only helping him to an easy triumph over you, but is the most likely method to prevent his ever being a christian. For seeing how easily he can ridicule mysteries, which, to him in his present state, can have no reasonableness in them, he is put into the most likely way of living and dying in a hardened contempt of them. Whereas if you stick close to the one true ground of christianity, and only proceed as that proceeds, and make the the unbeliever no offers of any other christianity, but that which is to begin with the acknowledged sensibility of the fall of human nature from its first divine life ; you stop where you ought, and rob him of all power and pretence of meddling with the other mysteries of salvation.

For Deism has no natural foundation, or ground of its own, to stand upon ; it does not grow from any root or strength within itself, but is what it is (in the general way of speaking) merely from the *bad state* of christendom, and the *miserable use* that heathenish learning and worldly policy, have made of the gospel. If it (deism) seems to itself to be *strong and well grounded*, it is merely because it can so easily object to church-doctrines, and scholastic opinions : If it seems to itself to be good, it is because it can so easily lay open the evils which christians and churches bring upon one another : if it seems to itself to be *highly rational*, its reason is, because it is free from that number of absurdities and contradictions, which christian churches lay to the charge of one another. Lastly, if it keeps off all fearful forebodings of the consequences of not receiving the gospel, it is because it so plainly sees, that



that christians say, *hail, master*, kiss the gospel, and then break every part of it. This is the true height, and depth, and total strength of deism or infidelity, it never had any other support but this; nor did I ever converse with a Deist, who carried the matter higher or farther than this, to support the cause.

Let me now only observe to you, that nothing can be more right than not to enter into debate about the gospel doctrines, or propose the reasonableness of them, to any one, till he owns himself sensibly convinced of the fore-mentioned fall of man, and stands in a full desire to be saved or delivered from it. And if that time never comes, you must leave him as in the same incapacity to hear or judge of the Doctrines of the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Operation of the Holy Spirit, as *Epicurus* would be. For every man that cleaves to this world, that is in love with it and its earthly enjoyments, is a disciple of *Epicurus*, and sticks in the same mire of Atheism as he did, whether he be a modern Deist, a Popish or Protestant Christian, an Arian, or an Orthodox Teacher.— For all these distinctions are without any difference, if this world has the possession and government of his heart. For the whole of the matter lies solely in this, whether heaven or earth hath the heart and government of man.

Lastly, one word more and I have done; were there no existing monuments of the divine reality of the christian system, yet fact and experience alone are of sufficient authority to shew its origin to be divine, and to bear down also all the infidelity in the world.

For example: If you (the Deist) can shew me that your religion is of such tendency, that it makes man truly sensible of his duty, that it fills the mind with *true light*, that it reforms the *heart*, and dispo-

ses it right towards God; that it makes us more *reasonable* in all our actions, that it inspires us with *fortitude, humility, devotion,* and contempt of the *world*, that it give us right notions of the *greatness* of religion, the *sanctity* of morality, the *littleness* of every thing but God, the *vanity* of our passions, and the *misery* and corruption of our nature; then I will own myself an advocate for your religion. But do not experience and daily observation evince, that the reverse of all this is but too true a portrait of modern Deism? For who amongst you, I pray, makes even the least pretence to holiness? On the contrary; do not the greater part of you make it manifest to all around you, that you can live a life of pleasure, extravagance and debauchery; that you can indulge yourselves in the vain amusements and recreations of the age. And yet you talk of moral virtue,—and yet, with as little consistence, you recommend the practice of it to your deluded pupils—But know you not, that the morality of an *unreformed* heart, adds no more goodness to it, than *whited sepulchres* do to the rottenness of dead men's bones? It is as easy to have all that kind of goodness which you appeal to, as it is to be *civil, well-bred*, and a friend to the peace and order of that society of which one is a member. Even an Atheist may find his ends, and act suitably to his own principles of self-love, ease and reputation, by this moral virtue.

O, my friends! It is unto you in particular, who were once my christian friends! that I would address myself. Suffer me to ask; what have you substituted in the place of christianity?—You have embraced a change of opinion, it is true, but without any more altering or bettering your state in God, than if you had only altered your opinion about things in dispute amongst the ancient philosophers. But what have you gained besides? are you now become

become greater examples of piety and goodness; more eminent and conspicuous, to mankind around you, for a life devoted to God, than when you were Christian? O Sirs! your own experience if you would be ingenuous, must lead you to confess, that it is not so. What avails then all that wild rant and vociferous din that you make about religion, when your lives are so irreligious?

Further, what have your deistical opinions contributed to the moral education of your children? alas! I am afraid there are too many instances, in which the case is much the same with them, as yourselves: like father, like son.—A striking proof of this remark I have, from a circumstance of which I was an eye-witness only a few weeks ago.—Gracious God! is this the blessed fruit of, what our modern unbelievers call, the *SUBLIME* of Deism? yes, reader, it is that *absolute perfect* faculty, which they set up as the unerring standard of all that is *wise, holy, and good*; it is in their strong language, *reason, the use of reason, human reason* that does all this.

A parent that is of too refined an understanding to content himself with the morals of the gospel, or its low way of making men good, and wants to be entertained with a virtue of more mathematical exactness, is often content with the demonstration, and so remains deficient in the plainest duties of domestic discipline; when the poor labourer or mechanic, that knows not what you mean by a definition, has all that solid love and affection that becomes a good relation. All this, and much more, which you and every one may think for himself of the same kind, is a sufficient proof, that the ground of goodness in every man, is something entirely distinct from our natural faculties of reason and speculation.

Lastly:



Lastly : Should any of my unbelieving readers be disposed, to declare war against the arguments here offered in support of christianity, I will venture to say, they will have no choice of any other weapons but dogmatism and misrepresentation. To call them the effusions of fanaticism and superstition will be doing something ; to call christianity a cunningly-devised engine calculated only to enforce passive subjection to kings and priests may stand the infidel in some stead ; but if he tries to controvert them any other way, his success will be like his who knocks his head against a post.

### FINIS.

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